

CPR brief -Implications of UN Secretariat Changes to Planning and Budgeting

06 February 2018

Objective of the note:

- To sensitise the Committee of Permanent Representatives to changes to the UN Secretariat led Programming and Budgeting process
- To prompt thinking by outlining possible options on how UN Environment Programme can adapt to these changes. No decision is required at this stage, as a further, more detailed note will follow to inform a series of deliberations with the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

Background:

On 24 December 2017, the General Assembly adopted resolution 72/266 to reform the UN Secretariat Planning and Budgeting process. The key changes are:

- The UN Secretariat budgeting and performance reporting cycle will be shortened to 1 year.
- The adoption of an integrated planning and budget document for the UN Secretariat, with 3 sections:
 - Section 1 – a 3-year plan outline plan that reflects the objectives and outcomes of the organisation, to replace the strategic framework.
 - Section 2 – an annual budget with performance information for the prior reporting period.
 - Section 3 – a detailed analysis of post and non-post resources.
- The Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Administrative Questions (ACABQ) and the Committee on Programme Coordination (CPC) intends to review the integrated planning document at the same time in the annual cycle. In turn, they will submit their recommendations to the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly having reviewed the same annual document. In the past they have reviewed separate biennial documents for UN Environment Programme.

Implications for UN Environment:

This means there will be no Biennial Programme Budget to submit to the UN secretariat and General Assembly for 2020-21. Instead, there will be a 3-year strategic framework for 2020–2022 accompanied by an annual budget for 2020. Preparations will begin in 2018 for this new process, with reviews and approvals in 2019.

As UN Environment has a dual governance structures that include the General Assembly (as part of the UN Secretariat) and the UN Environment Assembly, it is required to service both bodies independently with strategic plans, budgets and performance reports. Historically, UN Environment has successfully aligned the strategic planning and budgeting planning cycles of both governing bodies efficiently with two versions of the same document and a well-choreographed consultation. The changes above adopted by the General Assembly mean that these planning cycles will no longer be aligned.

Options to consider:

In order to initiate consultation and sensitize the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the options below are presented to prompt thinning.

In addition, background information on the Secretary General's reform of the Planning and Budgeting Process would also be presented. The option selected would need to maintain full alignment to Agenda 2030, similar to the outcome maps in the current Medium Term Strategy 2018-21.

Option 1: No change

- This will allow UN Environment Programme to maintain the momentum in line with the Medium Term Strategy for 2018-21 and the Programme of Work and Budget for 2018-19 as approved by the UN Environment Assembly in 2016.
- However, it will increase the number of planning documents and cycles. There will be a risk of conflicting performance indicators as documentation, planning cycles.
- Timeframes would no longer be aligned.

Option 2: A 6-year Medium Term Strategy with a 3-year Programme of Work with a rolling annual Budget

- This option will allow alignment with the documentation, process and timeframes enforced by the UN secretariat.
- A 6-year strategy will accommodate the existing 2-year cycles for the UN Environment Assembly.
- The Medium Term Strategy would comprise two Programmes of Work (of 3 years each) similar to the current situation.
- The approval of the two 3-year Programmes of Work and annual budgets will present a challenge, given the current 2-year UN Environment Assembly cycle.
- If this option is chosen, once again, a decision on how to manage the transition from the existing process to the new one will be required.

Option 3: A combined 3-year Medium Term Strategy and Programme of Work with a rolling annual Budget

- This will ensure full alignment with the documentation, process and timeframes being implemented by the UN Secretariat.
- It also ensures an efficient and streamlined process.
- However, to have the UN Environment Assembly approve 3-year plans when it meets every 2 years, would present a challenge as this will require a budgetary Environment Assembly every 3 years.
- If this option is chosen, a further decision on how to manage the transition from the existing process to the new one will be required.

Option 3b: Same as option 3 above, but with a 1-year extension of the current MTS (Medium Term Strategy)